

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 /078 W
----- 059573

R 291412Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2466

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, AR, IS

SUBJECT: ISRAELIS ARRESTED IN ARGENTINA

1. CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION HAS BEEN DEVOTED HERE THIS WEEK TO REPORTS ON THE ARRESTS IN CORDOBA OF A GROUP OF EIGHT JEWS - FIVE ISRAELIS AND THREE ARGENTINES. THE DETAILS OF THE ARRESTS HAVE NOT YET BEEN CLARIFIED AND THE REPORTS EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER JEWS IN ARGENTINA.

2. THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF SOUTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS IN THE MFA (ARMON) TOLD US THAT THE MINISTRY BELIEVES THAT THE ARESTS WERE CAUSED BY A "MISUNDERSTANDING." HE SAID THE GROUP WAS RETURNING FROM A SEMINAR WHICH HAD BEEN HELD IN A JEWISH CLUB (COMITE) IN CORDOBA WHEN THEY WERE ARRESTED BY MILITARY AUTHORITIES. THE FIVE ISRAELIS HAD BEEN IN ARGENTINA ONLY A FEW DAYS AND HAD BEEN SENT THERE BY THE WORLD ZIONIST ORGANIZATION'S YOUTH AND PIONEER DEPARTMENT TO WORK ONLY WITH EDUCATION AND HEBREW LANGUAGE MATTERS. NO OTHER ARRESTS HAD BEEN REPORTED. THE OUTCOME IS NOT YET CLEAR BECAUSE THE ARGENTINE AUTHORITIES HAVE INFORMED THE ISRAELI EMBASSY THAT THEY MUST STUDY THE MATERIALS FOUND ON THE GROUP AT THE TIME OF THEIR ARREST; THE MATERIALS ARE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN HEBREW AND PRESUMABLY MUST BE TRANSLATED. THE CASE IS

COMPLICATED BY THE FACT THAT THE GROUP IS HELD BY REGIONAL MILITARY AUTHORITIES RATHER THAN BY THE CENTRAL AUTHORITIES AND ACCESS TO THEM HAS BEEN DENIED TO THE EMBASSY.

3. MEMBERS OF THE GROUP HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS YOSEF AND KATI PICK, YITZHAK AND CLARA ESTRUGO, AND AMNON RUDIN. THE ARGENTINES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS TWO ADVISORS TO COMITE AND THE SISTER OF A SECRETARY IN THE YOUTH AND PIONEER DEPARTMENT IN BUENOS AIRES. RUDIN AND THE PICKS ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE ONLY ISRAELI PASSPORTS BUT THE ESTRUGOS ARE DUAL NATIONALS AND TRAVELED TO ARGENTINA WITH ARGENTINE PASSPORTS. MRS. ESTRUGO'S PARENTS ARE REPORTED TO RESIDE IN CORDOBA.

4. COMMENT: THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE MFA INFORMED THE CHARGE' THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE CASE AND THAT HE WAS CALLING IN THE ARGENTINE CHARGE' TO ASCERTAIN THE FACTS AND EXPRESS THAT CONCERN. ARGENTINA HAS A LARGE AND PROSPEROUS JEWISH COMMUNITY WHICH, ACCORDING TO COMMENTS WE HAVE HEARD, HAS NOT BEEN AS SUPPORTIVE OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL AS MOST ISRAELIS WOULD LIKE. RABBI ABRAHAM HERSHBERG, CHIEF RABBI OF MEXICO AND PRESIDENT OF THE LATIN AMERICAN RABBINICAL COUNCIL, BRIEFLY DISCUSSED THE CASE DURING A CALL ON THE CHARGE' ON JULY 27 AND SAID THAT HE HAD UNDERTAKEN AN EFFORT TO OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION.
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Margaret P. Grafeld
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